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A Note on Colonel Oleg V. Penkovskiy

Colonel Penkovskiy's family was prominent even before the Russian Revolution, and continued to distinguish itself afterwards. Penkovskiy is one of the few men to have been awarded two Orders of the Red Banner for valor in combat. He was only 26 when he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and 31 when he made full colonel. His great uncle, General of the Army Valentin Penkovskiy, is (presumably) still Commander of the Belorussian Military District, which means that his troops are the first line of support to the Soviet Forces in East Germany.

Colonel Penkovskiy's friendships included many senior military officers, two of whom have recently been relieved from duty--and one of them jailed (according to reports from Moscow.) These are Marshal Zakharov, former Army Chief of Staff and General Serov, former Chief of Soviet Military Intelligence (General Serov is reportedly under arrest.) Penkovskiy was also a close friend of Chief Marshal of Artillery Varentsov, Chief of the Tactical Missile Forces for the Soviet Army. It is not known whether Marshal Varentsov has also been relieved.

Beginning with his assignment to the Military Diplomatic Academy in Moscow, a few years prior to his service in Turkey, Penkovskiy became a career intelligence officer, specializing in scientific intelligence operations for

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for which his engineering talents and education well qualified him. His assignments in Turkey, and then in Moscow, including a tour at the Dzherinsky Missile-Artillery Academy, all furthered his career as a Soviet officer engaged in learning scientific and technical secrets from the West.

Those West European and Turkish sources who knew him add, however, a further dimension to the portrait of Penkovskiy. He apparently was disenchanted with the oppressive control of the Communist Party over the military and over all aspects of Soviet life and, more particularly, he resented the efforts of the secret state police, the KGB, to interfere with the military.

The KGB-CRU (The Military Intelligence Service) rivalry seems to underlie much of the background of intrigue in this case. As a political trial in the context of Khrushchev's Soviet Union--in contrast to Stalin's--the case is of great interest.

The KGB and the Party have launched over the course of the last few months a drive to reassert their authority in all spheres of Soviet life. The artists and writers have either had to recant or face exile from the major cities or, in extreme cases, incarceration in mental hospitals. Scientists and engineers have also been worried. A high

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ranking "Chekist" (a secret police officer), General Yepishev, has been assigned the position of Chief of the Political Directorate of the Secret Armed Forces. General Yepishev was deputy chief of the secret police (then the MGB) when Stalin initiated the Doctor's Plot, the curtain raiser to a new mass purge that only his death cut short.

In this struggle the KGB has long considered the Military Intelligence Service, the GRU, as a dangerous rival, and one of those potential outposts of dissent to be watched and, hopefully, to be broken. Thus Colonel Penkovskiy seems to be caught in a web of intrigue including not only him but also the numerous general officers with whom he is acquainted, and the end result may well be the complete subjection of the military to the Party and the police.